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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: OBAMA'S AIT APPOINTEE, THE DALAI LAMA

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused December 6-8 news coverage on the legislature passing a bill to distribute consumption vouchers; on the local economy; and on the call to amend the Assembly and Parade Law.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language daily "China Post" called on United States President-elect Barack Obama to carefully select a suitable appointee as the top of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT). The editorial said no matter who is chosen, that person should be someone like former AIT Chairman Richard Bush or current AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt who has rich experience and knowledge about the Taiwan Strait and the region. Papers addressed the pros and cons of President Ma Ying-jeou's statement about not welcoming a Dalai Lama visit to Taiwan in 2009. An editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" supported Ma's decision while an editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said Taiwan should welcome the Dalai Lama to visit Taiwan at any time. The "Taiwan News" editorial further alleged that Ma's decline of the Dalai Lama's visit must be China's manipulation behind the scene, just as Washington instructed Ma how to behave during Ma's August transit in the United States. End summary

### ¶3. Obama's AIT Appointee

"Obama Must Be Careful on AIT Appointee"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/7):

"... However, we would like to respectfully advise the incoming leader of the world's most powerful country that he must take care to avoid making the same kinds of mistakes his predecessors did.  
...

"Former President Clinton made a major blunder when he decided to appoint fellow Arkansas attorney and old friend James C. Wood, who had little experience in international affairs and knew next to nothing about the situation in the Taiwan Strait. ...

"In 2001, when the Republican George W. Bush took over from Clinton, another major blunder was made. The AIT chairman was replaced by Therese Shaheen, a Florida businesswoman whose only known achievement was raising lots of campaign funds for the new president. ...

"Eventually, President Bush's administration relieved Shaheen of the position and she was replaced by Raymond Burghardt, a career diplomat who had previously served as chief of AIT's Taipei office and possessed extensive knowledge and experience in the region. Like his predecessor Richard Bush, the current AIT chairman has brought respectability back to AIT and performed well in his post.

"While we understand that AIT is not at the top of the list when it comes to the priorities of the new president-elect, we sincerely hope that Senator Barack Obama's advisors will take note of the

blunders made by predecessors in both parties. While the AIT chairman's post does not normally attract much attention in the rest of the world, appointing the wrong person to the position can cause serious trouble and have major repercussions.

"We do not have any special recommendations as for which specific individual should replace Burghardt at the top of AIT. If Richard Bush might be tapped to reprise his former role, such a move would definitely be welcomed here. Persuading Raymond Burghardt to stay in his post would be just as wise of an idea.

"However, we do recommend that no matter who gets chosen for the post, that person should be someone like Richard Bush or Raymond Burghardt who possesses valuable experience with this region and knows about recent developments in the Taiwan Strait."

#### 4. The Dalai Lama

##### A) "The Controversy of the Dalai Lama"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (12/6):

"... Every country regards the Dalai Lama as a political and religious leader, more than just a religionist. He [the Dalai Lama] is a symbol of human rights, the freedom of religion, and Tibet under oppression, which no one challenges. However, today the Taiwan voters' election of Ma [Ying-jeou] as President means [that Taiwan voters] support Ma's policy on cross-Strait reconciliation. Ma's turn-down of the Dalai Lama's visit for the moment is reasonable in terms of political logic."

##### B) "Taiwan Should Welcome Dalai Lama's Visit"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (12/8):

"What is most worrying is the possibility that Beijing told the KMT government (perhaps through the Chinese Communist Party-KMT forum) to take this position and the Ma administration did not dare to challenge this edict.

"This possibility cannot be excluded, especially in the wake of Ma's last minute nomination of KMT honorary chairman Lien Chan to represent the Taiwan leader at last month's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum summit in Lima, Peru instead of former Control Yuan president and ex-foreign minister Frederick Chien, reportedly at Beijing's behest.

"This succession of events hints that the People's Republic of China authorities can already go through underground channels or other paths to tell Ma what he is permitted and not permitted to do, just as Washington instructed him how to behave during his August transit stops through Los Angeles and San Francisco. ...

"In our view, in the current global situation, any time should be 'appropriate' for either Ma or Taiwan to receive a visit by the Dalai Lama and we urge the KMT government not to interfere with the DPP's invitation, which is beneficial for the long - term interests of Taiwan's people and the maintenance of our freedom and democracy. ..."

YOUNG